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Flow of Nonlethal Contra Aid Resumes After 3-Month Halt

Ambassador Alludes to Change in Delivery Mode

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Nonlethal U.S. aid to rebels fighting the Nicaraguan government is moving again after being halted in mid-October, knowledgeable State Department officials said yesterday.

The officials said earlier efforts to send the medicine, clothing and other supplies directly to the international airport at Tegucigalpa, Honduras, had been abandoned.

"The United Nicaraguan Opposition has worked out some alternative methods of delivery," Ambassador Robert W. Duemling, head of the Nicaraguan Humanitarian Aid Office, said in an interview. He refused to discuss the alternatives.

Rebel forces are known to be operating not only from Honduran bases but also from

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camps in Costa Rica. Other sources have said some supplies are moving into Honduras by truck from El Salvador.

Duemling said that about \$16.4 million of the \$27 million allocated for the nonlethal-aid program has been obligated and that the full amount will be committed by the time the program ends March 31. The Reagan administration is expected to seek to double the program and add military aid to the counterrevolutionaries, known as contras, for a total of about \$100 million worth.

Honduras maintains that the contras do not operate in its territory. Government troops seized a planeload of goods at the Tegucigalpa airport Oct. 10 after finding a U.S. television news crew aboard. Sources close to President-elect Jose Azcona have indicated that he probably will allow supplies into the capital airport again after he takes office next week but that such an action would not be officially acknowledged.

State Department officials said that in the next three weeks, the contras will acquire five or six flatbed trucks worth \$15,000 to \$20,000 each and five or six four-wheel-drive jeeps worth \$10,000 to \$15,000 each. The aid program also is expected to provide spare parts and maintenance equipment for planes obtained elsewhere by the rebels, if the planes are not used for combat, the officials said.

The rebels are using one longboat and outboard motor provided by the program to move wounded soldiers and could receive up to 12 more, the officials added. The boat and motor cost about \$5,000.

All the vehicles will be acquired "in the region," officials said, to minimize transport and spare-part problems.

Critics argued last summer that "humanitarian aid" should not include trucks or other vehicles that could be converted to military uses. But the House intelligence committee issued guidelines last November permitting vehicles to be purchased for strictly nonmilitary uses.

Duemling's office also has provided \$125,000 toward the contras' plan to educate their estimated 20,000 combatants and support troops in observing human rights and to investigate reported violations of those rights, Duemling said. "We strongly support this program and are happy to fund it," he said.

The contras hope to spend \$900,000 on such efforts over the next six months, assuming Congress provides more humanitarian aid, Duemling said.

The human rights program eventually would be headquartered in Miami under the direction of Arturo Cruz, the most prominent contra leader and a former member of the Nicaraguan government, another official said. At least 20 people would be employed to develop training materials, reproduce them, teach the troops and investigate reports of human rights violations by the contras in Honduras.

Alleged violations by Nicaraguan government officials also would be probed, and all reports would be made public, he said.

"As they demonstrate they can produce something, we'd be allocating more money," Duemling said.